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THE PERILOUS BRIDGE AND HUMAN AUTOMATA

It is unnecessary to add further support to the convincing evidence which has already been presented¹ for the non-Celtic origin of the Perilous Bridge, but for the sake of completeness, if for no other reason, I should like to call attention to an interesting reference which I have not seen cited in this connection, although it must be cited, a reference which, occurring where it does and when it does, shows conclusively that the bridge had made its way into popular story many years before the earliest reference to it in any Celtic tale, and from some source which clearly was not Celtic. William of Malmesbury (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* II, 170, ed. Stubbs, Rolls Series, 1887), records a story told to him in his childhood by a monk of Guienne. This monk, at the age of seven, had made his way into Italy, and hearing there a story of the treasures of Octavian, which were said to be buried in a certain hill, joined a party "praedandi seu videndi studio." Many men had lost their lives in the attempt to visit this subterranean treasure-house, and, in order to escape their fate, these adventurers adopted the device of Dædalus "qui Theseum de labyrintho filo eduxit praevisio." They fastened a string to the opening of the cave and, holding fast to this string, advanced cautiously into the bowels of the hill. Thick darkness was over all, bats flew from the dark recesses into their faces; the path, which was strewn with the bones of those who had come in hope but could not make their way out, was narrow, and on one side of it ran a dreadful river. Finally they came to a quiet pool, the water of which gently lapped the shore, and across this pool was a

¹ Cf. Patch, *PMLA*. xxxiii (1918), 601 ff., and the authorities quoted by him.

bridge of brass. On the other side were seen golden steeds of wondrous beauty, their riders all of gold, and they determined to carry off "aliquam splendidi metalli crustam." When one of them, however, tried to cross the bridge, straightway, "quod mirum auditu est, illo depresso, ulterior elevatus est, producens rusticum aereum cum aereo malleo, quo ille undas verberans, ita obnubilavit aera ut diem caelumque subtexeret; retracto pede, pax fuit." They gave up their attempt, therefore, and guided by the thread retraced their steps.

Stories of the fabulous wealth of Rome which lay buried in its ruins and in its tombs were current ² as early as the fifth cen. A. D., at least, and the popular fancy, quickened by tales brought from eastern lands to Sicily, and to Naples and other ports, soon constructed great cities beneath the earth in which were magnificent palaces filled with gold and precious stones, and guarded by dæmons in one form or another, or, as in our story, by automata. Thus, Conrad of Querfurt ³ records a Neapolitan tale of the treasures of the seven kings which were buried in the bowels of a hill, treasures "quos daemones ⁴ custodiunt in aereis imaginibus inclusi diversas terribiles imagines praetendentes, quidam arcu tenso, quidam gladiis comminantes." Similarly in the *Gesta Romanorum*, ch. 107 (Oes-

² Cf. Graf, *Roma nella Memoria e nelle Immaginazioni del Medio Evo*, I, 152 ff.

³ *Epist. ad Arnoldo di Lubecca*, in Leibnitz, *Script. rerum Brunsv.* II, 698, cited by Graf, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁴ The folk of Italy had long been familiar with stories of these dæmons which guarded treasure as is shown by a reference in Petronius, ch. 38, to the "incubones," who wore caps which, if a person could once obtain, gave him power over them and their gold; cf., also, Porphyrio on Horace, *Serm.* II, 6, 13, who tells a story of a peasant who had continually prayed to Hercules for wealth; Hercules took him to Mercury and had the latter disclose to the peasant a buried treasure; this the peasant dug up and with it bought the farm on which he had been a laborer. There is a curious reference in Plautus, *Aulularia*, 701, to the "Pici" (woodpeckers) "qui aureos montis colunt." In like manner the sources of the Nile were thought to be guarded by dæmons according to Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii Tyani* VI, 26, 3, and very naturally these dæmons turn up later in accounts of journeys to the marvellous lands of the East. Thus a certain Hieronymus (5th cen.) writes to a friend of his voyage to India, "ubi nascitur carbunculus—montesque aurei, quos adire propter gryphos et dracones et immensorum corporum monstra hominibus impossibile est"; Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, 22, pp. 1073.

terley), is a story of a certain clerk who, by solving the riddle of a statue which stood "in civitate Romana" with the right arm extended and bearing the inscription "percute hic," discovered a stairway leading down into the earth. He descended these stairs and found himself within a noble palace, in the hall of which he saw a king and queen and many lords and ladies sitting at a table, dressed in splendid raiment, adorned with precious stones. In a corner was a carbuncle, the brilliant rays from which gave light to the hall, and opposite the carbuncle was a youth holding a bow with its arrow pointed directly at the jewel. Not a word did any of these persons speak to the youth, and when he approached them, he found that they were stone. He determined to take with him some object which would serve as token of his adventure, but as soon as he took from the table one of the golden utensils, the statue which was standing in the corner shot the arrow at the carbuncle, shattered it to pieces, and immediately "tota aula facta est sicut nox tenebrosa"; the youth was unable to find his way out and "in eodem palacio misera morte mortuus est."

From these stories, and there are many more like them, we may conclude that before the twelfth century (William was born about 1100) the folk of Italy were no strangers to tales of marvellous palaces situated under hills, inhabited by people of stone or gold, lighted by the rays from some brilliant gem, and guarded by automata which, by one means or another, prevented the one who chanced to make his way thither, from carrying off any of their wealth. Some such tale,—it may have been the very one preserved in the *Gesta*,—William of Malmesbury, in the chapter preceding that from which I have quoted, connects with the famous Gerbert, Pope Sylvester II. He it was, according to William, who solved the riddle of the statue, made his way, with one companion, into the golden palace, beheld its many wonders, and the brilliant gem which "parvus inventu tenebras noctis fugabat," saw the figures rush toward them when they reached out their hands to touch any object, saw the bowman shoot his arrow when his companion took a knife from the table, and was only able to save himself and his companion by making him throw the knife back.

It is very evident that, although the matter of such stories is the natural product of the fancy of the Italian folk, living as they did,

among the ruins of a mighty civilization,⁵ many of the details which adorn the tales are of extraneous origin, chiefly oriental. The reader of the *Arabian Nights* will readily recall many similar tales of wonderful cities and palaces both on and under the earth, tenanted by men of wood or stone, as, for example, the tale of the Third Lady of Bagdad, (Burton, I, 104); of statues which bear inscriptions containing the key to some riddle, as in the tale of The City of Brass, (Burton, VI, 95 ff.), of dæmons or automata which protect hidden treasures, as in this same tale, (Burton, VI, 115, 118),⁶ and of a wonderful gem the brilliant rays from which illumine the palace, as in the former tale, (Burton, I, 166).⁷ The device of the thread in the monk's story to William may have been suggested, as he says, by the Theseus-Ariadne story, but it occurs, also, it may be noted, in the version of the Alexander romance contained in the *Talmud*, Tractat Tamid, fol. 31 b; Alexander is told by the wise men of the South that he cannot make his way into Africa because the Mountain of Darkness bars the road; he tells them that he must go, and they then bid him fasten one end of a ball of string to the entrance of the mountain and, as he makes his way forward, to keep firm hold on the string.

In various versions of the Alexander story we find, also, other features of our monk's tale. In the letter of Alexander to his mother Olympias,⁸ we read that after he and his army arrived at a sea of honey-sweet water, a fish is caught in the belly of which was a stone of such remarkable brilliance that Alexander used it to give

⁵ Such tales are still current especially in Sicily; cf. Pitre, *Tradizioni Siciliane*, xvii (*Usi e Credenze* IV, 369 ff.). Interesting is the tale reported on p. 393 which tells of a treasure hidden within a mountain guarded by a marble statue holding in its hand an enormous mace,—the descendant, it may be, of the "rusticus" of William's story.

⁶ Cf. the automatic archers in the supplemental tale of Joodar of Cairo, quoted by Clouston, "On the Magical Elements in the Squire's Tale," *Chaucer Society*, Second Ser., p. 304.

⁷ This is common; cf. Burton, VI, 114, and *Supplemental Nights*, IV, p. 354; here the gem is found in the belly of a fish, a motif found in the *Talmud*, Schabbath 119 a, and in the *Midrasch*; cf. Köhler, *Kl. Schr.* II, 209; cf. the story of Charlemagne's ring, Paulus Diac., *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, Mon. Serip. Germ. II, 264, the reference in the Alexander romance, cited below, and the ring of Polycrates, Herodotus, III, 41 ff.

⁸ Edition of Müller, section 38. Cf. Crane, *Rom. Rev.* IX (1918), 129 ff., for an excellent bibliography on this subject.

light at night, and in the French version ⁹ of the romance we have a description of two golden automata which, with great maces in their hands, defend the bridge over which Alexander has to make his way. Although this may be the first reference to *two* automata "defending the entrance to something," ¹⁰ our story in William of the one automaton, who with his mace defends the bridge, antedates it by at least fifty years. The latter story, or some version of it may well, indeed, have suggested the conception to the French poets, but this oriental matter was apparently common property during the twelfth century and perfectly familiar to them; compare, *e. g.* the two automata which guard the tomb that Alexander erected over the Admiral,¹¹ with the two automata which guard the dead maiden in the story of the City of Brass.¹² It would seem, also, that the story which William tells of Gerbert, containing the episode of the archer and the brilliant carbuncle, suggested to the author of *Énéas* ¹³ the figure of the archer and the lamp which he puts over the grave of Camilla. William, writing during the early years of the twelfth century, was surely not the only one who had heard this story, for the version in the *Gesta Romanorum*, to which I have referred, concerning as it does a nameless clerk, must have been current, as Graf notes (*l. c.* p. 164), before the story could have been attached to Gerbert. There is, however, the possibility that Byzantine romances may have furnished these automata to the French poets; it is interesting, at any rate, to find a figure very similar to this archer in the Greek romance of Eumathius, (twelfth century).¹⁴ The author describes as follows an ordeal for virginity practiced in a famous temple of Artemis in the city of Artycomis. In the middle of this temple is a large golden statue of Artemis, holding in her hand an outstretched bow; between the feet of the

⁹ *Lambert li Tors et Alexandre de Bernay*, edited by Michelant, Stuttgart, 1846, p. 343. On these and similar automata in French romance, cf. Bruce, "Human Automata in Classical Tradition and Mediæval Romance," *Mod. Phil.*, x (1913), 511 ff.

¹⁰ Bruce, *l. c.*, p. 518.

¹¹ Michelant, p. 445; Bruce, p. 518.

¹² *Arabian Nights*, tr. Burton, vi, 115.

¹³ Ed. Jacques Salverda de Grave, Halle, 1891, vs. 7691 ff. The figure occurs also in versions of the Virgil story; cf. Bruce, p. 516, n. 2, and p. 521.

¹⁴ Ed. Le Bas, in *Erotici Scriptores*, Didot, 1885, bk. viii, 7.

statue issues a spring, flowing like a river, the waters of which make a mighty noise and seem to the eyes of the beholder to boil. Into this spring is cast the maiden whose chastity has been questioned, her head crowned with laurel; if she is a virgin, Artemis does not shoot her bow, the waters of the spring lie quiet, and the maiden floats gently on the surface, the crown still fast upon her head. If, however, love has robbed the maiden's flower, straightway Artemis, the virgin goddess, pulls taut her bow, the arrow threatens to fly at the guilty girl who, in fear of it, hides her head beneath the waves, and the tossing waters carry off the crown. Eumathius owed the suggestion for this oracle, as he owed much else, to the romance of Achilles Tatius who, in VIII, 6 (*Erot. Script.* p. 117), describes a similar ordeal at Ephesus. Here there was a famous cave at the entrance to which hung Pan's pipe, the syrinx. The girl under suspicion would enter the cave, the doors would be closed, and, if she was innocent, the sweetest harmony would come forth from the pipe,—because, mayhap, Pan himself played upon it;—the doors would then open of their own accord, and the girl would be seen wearing a crown of pine. If, however, she was guilty, the pipe was dumb, and instead of harmony, there would come from the cave the sound of lamentation; in such an event, the spectators would hastily withdraw, and the priestess of the cave, when she entered it three days later, would find the pipe lying on the ground, but the woman was seen no more.

These two passages, taken together, present a striking analogue to the description of the two statues, one of gold, the other of silver, which in *Li Livre de Caradoc*,¹⁵ stand at the entrance to Alardin's tent: "Ens en sa main tenoit un dart, / Jà n'i veist entrer vilain / Ne le ferist trestout a plain; / Et l'autre ymage qui tenoit / La harpe une costume avoit: / Puciële ne s'i puet celer;/ Qui ensi se face apiéler / Por oec que soit despucelée,/ Tantos come vient à l'entrée / La harpe sone la descorde; / De la harpe ront une corde." We cannot assume, of course, that we are dealing here with direct borrowing, but we are dealing, it seems to me, with traditional matter.

There were many possible sources, therefore, both in the written

¹⁵ *Conte del Gral*, 13353 ff., Potvin, *Perceval li Gallois*, III, 117 ff.; cf. Bruce, *l. c.*, p. 519.

record and in popular story, whence the mediæval writer may have drawn his idea of such automata, and how prevalent the idea was the investigation of Professor Bruce shows. This investigation should be made exhaustive, however, in the field both of classical and of mediæval literature,¹⁶ for in the mediæval *Itinera*, *Chronicles*, *Lives of the Saints* we are likely to come upon many a tale straight from the heart of the folk. Such is the tale which the monk told to William, and it is important from several points of view. First, it shows us that Italy, especially South Italy, the inheritor of classic tradition and the recipient of stories from the East owing to its close connection during the centuries with races of oriental stock, was the center from which spread tales of all sorts; secondly, it illustrates one way, at least, in which these tales spread, for William's monk had many a brother just as romantic and far-travelled as himself; and, thirdly, it furnishes us convincing evidence that a story, in which were combined features dear to the heart of the Celtic folk-lorist and cited by him time and time again as proof of the working of the Celtic fancy, was current among the folk of Italy before 1100 A. D., and had reached England by the first decade of the twelfth century.

It does not follow, however, that these features made their way into literature from this story, for there were other possible channels. The Norsemen, in whose mythology the perilous bridge, at least, is no stranger,¹⁷ may have brought it both to France and to Ireland; its appearance in our Italian story, on the other hand, seems to be too early, if William is telling the truth, to have been the result of the influence of Norse settlements in South Italy. Then again, we must reckon with the influence of the Jews, large numbers of whom had settled in Gaul since the fifth century, nor must we forget that, beginning with the seventh century, the influ-

¹⁶ Cf. for example, the two dogs of gold and silver which stand at the entrance to the palace of Alcinoos in Homer, *Odys.* vii, 91, the tripods of Hephaistos in *Iliad*, 18, 376, and the many similar self-impelled utensils which Apollonius saw among the Hindoos, Philostratus, *vita Apol.* 3, 27, 1; 5, 12. According to Aristotle, *de Mirabilibus Auscultationibus* 175, on the altar of Artemis Orthosia stood a golden bull which emitted a sound whenever any huntsman came into the temple; cf. the description in *Dieu Crône*, 6993 ff., of the black figure which blew a blast upon a horn whenever a strange knight came to the castle, cited by Bruce, *l. c.*, p. 523.

¹⁷ Cf. Patch, *l. c.*, p. 639.

ence of the apocryphal literature of the East, which was saturated with oriental tradition, was becoming all-pervasive.¹⁸ One fact, however, is plain; the presence in a story from Italy of the eleventh century, of the magnificent palace within a hill, the narrow path, the dreadful river, the active bridge, the monster guard, the storm-making spring, features, moreover, which occur separately in more than one tale from classical and oriental sources, renders entirely unnecessary any appeal to "the crucible of Celtic fancy" to explain the presence of these same details, either separately or in combination, in French or English story posterior by many years to the monk's tale preserved by William of Malmesbury.

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SCHILLER AND THE GENESIS OF ROMANTICISM

PART II

Friedrich Schlegel himself bore clear and emphatic testimony to the decisive impression produced upon him by his first reading of the second instalment of Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*. In a letter to A. W. Schlegel, January 15, 1796, he writes:

"Dann hat mich Schiller's Theorie des Sentimentalen so beschäftigt, dass ich einige Tage nichts andres gethan habe, als sie lesen und Anmerkungen schreiben. . . . Schiller hat mir wirklich Aufschlüsse gegeben. Wenn mir innerlich so etwas kocht, so bin ich unfähig etwas andres ruhig vorzunehmen. Der Entschluss,

¹⁸ Cf. Günter, *Die christliche Legende des Abendlandes*, Heidelberg, 1910, pp. 139-140, 149. From this source, it would seem, comes the active bridge of glass in the *Voyage of Maelduin*; cf. Patch, *l. c.*, p. 636. In regard to the example of the active bridge quoted from the *Tochmarc Emere*, it may be noted that in the earliest version of this story in the *Leabhar na h'Uidre* the episode is wanting, nor does it follow that, because the version in the Stowe ms. of the 14th cen., which does contain the episode, agrees with that in the former as far as it goes, the incident of the bridge had a place in the earlier version; for it is lacking, also, in the version contained in the Rawlinson, B. 512, vellum ms., which, according to Hyde, *The Literary History of Ireland*, p. 296, represents the oldest recension founded on a pro-Danish text.